SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

NONCONFORMIST.

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PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THE EDUCATION ACT.

The Education Act has come into full operation, and there can be no question that it has, to a considerable extent, stirred the feelings and stimulated the action of a very large proportion of the community. It has proved that the interest of the people in this great question was only dormant; that if little or no interest in it had previously been shown, it was because the Government had gone the wrong way to work—possibly, because the Government had not originally left it altogether alone; it has given a new proof of the immense utility of English municipal and parochical institutions, and it has developed a large amount of practical ability and capacity for dealing with important public questions. What have been its other results, and how far has it answered the purposes of its authors?

1. *New Denominational Schools.*

The first practical result of the Act has been to give an extraordinary stimulus to the promoters of the denominational system. Earl Granville stated, at a recent meeting of the British and Foreign School Society, that while, during the last thirty years, only 5,000 building grants had been applied for, during the last five months applications had been received in the Education Department of the Privy Council for the building of 3,000 new denominational schools. There are already more than 7,000 of this class of schools receiving aid from the State; the number now will probably increased to upwards of 10,000. It is to be assumed. of course, that not all the 3,000 applications will receive a favourable consideration. Whether they will or not, will depend upon the bias of the Privy Council Committee. If it should be wedded to its own system in preference to the local system established under Mr. Forster's Act, it will encourage the formation of such additional schools, even in places where it is certain that the Act is, or will be, brought into practical operation. The effect of this will be, as it has been in more than one locality, that the denominational schools will supply the whole of the educational demand, and leave no room whatever for the working of the new Act. The entire educational machinery may be mainly, for instance, in the hands of the Church of England, and, whatever may be the desire of the population for an unsectarian education, or whatever the antipathy to Church schools, to such schools they must send their children. There will not even be, in most cases, the alternative of sending them nowhere, for, in almost every borough and parish, so far as we have been able to ascertain, the compulsory principle has been adopted. The Act, therefore, has as yet worked, as it was said it would work, notwithstanding its illusory Conscience Clause, in favour not of unsectarianism but of denominationalism. The 3,000 new schools, more or fewer, will be established long before the unsectarian schools of the school boards can be in operation. As Prebendary Thorold remarked at the meeting of the Home and Colonial School Society, the stimulus given to the old system has been "extraordinary," and its advocates had certainly not given it up in despair.

2. *School Boards.*

More than 220 boroughs, and certainly some hundreds of parishes, have adopted the School Act. In Wales alone, we believe, there are no fewer than 150 boards established. In the large towns a great, if not the greater, number of the boards, contain a majority of Churchmen, certainly of Churchmen and other denominationalists. The unsectarian party have not known how to organise themselves, or they have been surprised into defeat by the action of the cumulative vote. In boroughs where the return of Liberal members of Parliament may be held to be certain and almost unvarying, Conservative Churchmen have been returned in a majority, the same persons voting for the members of the School Board who would have voted for the Parliamentary representatives. The elections have been carried by votes, not by voters, so that a minority of rate-payers have been able to elect a majority on the board. The circumstances attending many of these elections have shown that the Act has increased the bitterness of political and ecclesiastical feeling, and, to what would have been regret at any defeat, added exasperation at an unjust defeat. It must be said, however, that the rate-payers have, in another sense, known how to choose their representatives, for some of the best intellect of England is represented on the various school boards.

3. *Statistics of Education.*

The Act, through the statistical inquiries which it directs to be made, has shown that a great number of children are without the means of education. But for what has justly been called the red-tapeism of Government, it would have been possible by this time to have ascertained how many children there are in every borough and parish between three and thirteen, how many are educated and how many are not educated. School boards, one after the other, have applied to the Registrar-General for the information upon this point given in the last census. The uniform answer has been that it cannot be furnished until July next, when, if permission had been, or were to be given, the principal enumerator in each district, could give the information in a minute. In the absence of this the boards are taking immense and needless trouble, and incurring immense and needless expense in taking an Educational Census for themselves. The results are mainly what might have been expected, but in some cases are very surprising. At a recent meeting of the London School Board, Viscount Sandon stated that from returns which had been furnished by enumerators, there was want of school accommodation in Chelsea for 16,000 children, in Finsbury for 39,000 children, and in Southwark for 17,000 children. Another surprising fact was stated by Mr. Scrutton, that, although in the Tower Hamlets, there should be accommodation for 63,000 children, there was, already, accommodation provided, or being provided, for nearly the whole of that number. In other large towns the want of accommodation similarly varies. Shields will have to provide increased accommodation for 4,092 children, and Derby for 1,540. Sheffield has at present a surplus accomodation for 6,130, but to meet the requirements of the Act, will have to provide further accommodation to the extent of 8,046. High Wycombe must furnish accommodation for 446 children, while there are 234 children in addition who are not being educated. In Hertford only 100 remain to be provided for.

In connection with this section an interesting and vital question, already hinted upon, has arisen. What is, or what will be considered to be, "sufficient" accommodation? Are the ages of children to be alone considered? is no account to be taken of the circumstances — ecclesiastical mainly — of their parents? At Hertford the question has arisen, whether, for the 100 children for whom provision has to be made, it would not be desirable to establish a school "on the principles of the Church of England"? A motion to that effect was lost, and it was resolved to establish a school board, and therefore, of course, an unsectarian school. The question has come up, in a more delicate shape, at Cardigan. There are, in that borough, 724 children of school age, but in a suburb of the town there exists a National School containing a considerable surplus accommodation. The question is whether, in a town of Nonconformists, that surplus accommodation should be reckoned? The board has decided that it should not be. It considers such excess, "whilst the National School remains denominational, as insufficient and unsuitable for the children of the remaining part of the population, who are Nonconformists. Although many have hitherto attended the national school, it was principally by reason of the want of proper school buildings for the accommodation of the British school, and this board anticipates a speady diminution of such attendance as soon as proper school accommodation shall be provided by and under the superintendence of this board, being fully aware that Nonconformists in general regard the time-table or conscience clause, under the 7th section of the Elementary Education Act, and the new code recently published, with disfavour and distrust, and as troublesome and invidious, and likely to be found in practice a delusion and a snare." The Churchmen protest against this, but protest at present, in vain. But what will Mr. Forster do? Will he approve of the Church School for Nonconformists, or of the Unsectarian School which they desire to establish?

The case of two of the townships of Leeds is still more striking. These townships contain, it is stated, one-fourth of the entire population of the borough, and it has been found that there is, or will be, an excess of accommodation for 814 children; but the accommodation is denominational. There it is, however, and the Board report that, "under existing circumstances, they regret that they cannot provide the accommodation in school board schools in those districts to meet the requirements of those who desire it." The result, as Alderman Joy remarked at one of the meetings of the board, will be that the whole of the education will be monopolised by the denominationalists:—

> Such a mode (the Alderman went on to remark) of conducting education might be considered fair and right by those who favoured such a system, but for himself he considered it most unjust to those who did not. The statement would be made in reply that these schools would be under the conscience clause. He was one of those who thought the conscience clause not worth the paper it was printed upon. Those who had conscientious objections to the religious teaching in denominational schools had entertained the hope that in the board schools, where denominational differences would not exist, they would have an opportunity of having their children instructed. Were the inhabitants of the town to have no option to the choice of schools, were there only to be denominational schools open to them, he for one should hesitate to vote for compulsory attendance, because he would not compel people who had conscientious objections to send their children to such schools. Parents were told in the Act that they might have a choice in selecting the school; but how could there be a choice in a district where there was only one kind of school?

But this is not all, we imagine. *The unsectarian people will have to pay their children's fees to the denominational schools, to which they object, and to pay the rate for the unsectarian schools elsewhere, of which they cannot take any advantage.*

4. *Compulsion.*

Most of the school boards, following the example of the metropolis, have decided to adopt the principle of compulsion. As the Bishop of Exeter has said, "No child is to be seen about the streets during school-hours." The compulsion is to extend, as a rule, to all children between three and thirteen, not excusable by illness, or other circumstances of which the boards will judge. The parent may send his child to any school that he prefers, if there is a choice; if not, at least to some school. He will be fined if he neglects or disobeys the order made upon him—the maximum fine, in most cases, we notice, not exceeding five shillings. This is a specimen of the "Notice to Defaulters," which we take from the Maidstone rules:—

> School Board for the Borough of Maidstone to wit.—To Mr. .—Take notice, that you are hereby required forthwith to cause your child to attend, and continue to attend, a public elementary school. You are further to take notice that, unless you cause your said child to attend school as aforesaid, you are hereby required to attend a meeting of the said board to be held at on the day of at o'clock, and give your reason, or reasons, why your said child does not attend school as aforesaid. And herein if you fai lyou will be

liable to be proceeded against according to law. Dated this day of , A.D. 187 .

Clerk to the Board.

School Board Office, High-street, Maidstone.

In some other places the policy of employing a "Persuader," or "Children's Beadle," has been discussed and adopted, and until it shall be found to have failed, compulsion will not be resorted to. A very admirable notice has been drawn up by the Berkhampstead Board, consisting of a plain, concise, and persuasive address to parents and others having charge of children, setting forth the object of the Act, the necessity and advantages of education, and the means locally provided for furnishing it. Persuasion, however, is more practicable in small than in large towns, and therefore, for the greater part of the population, compulsion will be used.

5. *Religion.*

All the boards, without exception, as far as we have observed, have decided to adopt some form of religious teaching in board schools, not merely the reading of the Bible, but such teaching from the Bible as shall not contravene either the spirit or the letter of the Education Act. It seems to be taken for granted that the teachers will be able to comply with this instruction: that any teacher can teach religion. A specimen of the bye-laws adopted on this subject is to be found in the Tynemouth rules, as follows:—

That, in the schools provided by this Board, and also in schools under their management, the Bible shall be read daily, and there shall be given therefrom by the teachers such explanations and instructions in the principles of religion and morality as are suitable to the capabilities of children; that in such explanations and instructions the provisions of the Act in Sections 7 and 14 be strictly observed, both in letter and spirit; and that no attempt be made in any such schools to attach children to any particular denomination.

We have observed, with pleasure, the honest agreement in unsectarianism, as far as this rule is concerned; but the real pinch, we imagine, will come when the teachers are to be chosen. But unquestionably religious teaching, such as it may be, will have to be paid out of the rates.

6. *Aid from Rates to Denominational Schools.*

The question, however, which has caused the greatest excitement, and which may lead to the most serious political results in connection with the working of this Act, is, whether the fees of those parents who cannot afford to pay for the education of their children, but prefer that their children should go to a denominational school, should be paid for by the school boards out of the rates. The debates at the London, Birmingham, and Liverpool Boards upon this subject have attracted great attention; but the question has been already debated and settled in several other places, and the settlement, as we believe, has been uniformly in favour of such payments. We thus have revived, once more, as was clearly enough prophesied, the payment of rates not only for religious, but for denominational teaching. Each sect that chooses is to have the privilege of dinging its dogmas into the ears of the little children, and not only so, but is to be paid for doing it.

The opposition which this proposal has excited in the great towns, and the resentment which it has occasioned amongst the leading Nonconformist bodies, as well as amongst many Liberal Churchmen and all men of unsectarian mind, have induced the denominationalists to pause in their intentions. This has been the final result of the very able debate in the London Board, where, as elsewhere, every step in this direction has been fought inch by inch. Seeing, we suppose, how the question was being settled in some country places, the Rev. J. Rodgers thought it time to grapple with it at once. He therefore moved a resolution to the effect that the funds at the disposal of the board being in part derived from the rates, no portion of them should be given towards the support of denominational schools. This motion was lost, and an amendment to the opposite effect, moved by Canon Cromwell, was carried by twenty-three to twenty—the twenty-three being made up, as such majorities have been throughout the country, by a combination of the forces of the Established Church, the Wesleyans, and the Roman Catholics. Thus, in Canon Cromwell's majority, we find first the Canon himself, Dr. Barry, Canon Miller, and Mr. W. H. Smith representing the Church; Mr. Hutchins and Mr. Langdale the Roman Catholics; and Dr. Rigg the Wesleyans. In the minority are an altogether different class—Mr. Reed, M.P., Dr. Angus, Mrs. Anderson, Mr. Hepworth Dixon, Professor Huxley, the Rev. W. Rogers (rector of St. Botolph), and the Rev. J. A. Picton. However, the question is not yet finally settled, for on the proposal that Canon Cromwell's amendment should be put as a substantive resolution, it was met by "the previous question," which was carried almost unanimously. But the minority have only succeeded in staving the matter off. It must be settled some day or other. As public opinion is now going, we venture to predict that, in the end, the minority will win.

The debates at the Birmingham Board have been attended with much the same history. Here Mr. Dale, Mr. Vince, and Mr. Dawson have entitled themselves to the gratitude of all Nonconformists by the signal ability, eloquence, and determination with which they have vindicated the principles of religious freedom and equality. We have read their speeches with profound admiration, but what can they do against a board with a fixed majority of denominationalists elected by the cumulative vote, and led by the vicar and the Roman Catholic priest? By-the-by, the latter gentleman, Canon O'Sullivan, made no secret of the reason why he should support the payment of denominational teaching. Mr. J. S. Wright, in his speech in opposition, remarked that "he could not help fancying that they should be making a direct contribution to the support of a cathedral in Birmingham, in which the doctrine of the invocation of the saints, the adoration of the Virgin, and the infallibility of the Pope were to be taught." "Hear, hear," cried the Canon, and he had reason enough to do so. In Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, and Portsmouth, this subject has been debated with similar eagerness and a similar sense of its great importance, for it may ultimately involve, not merely the sectarian fates of little children, but the fall of a great statesman and a great political party. Nowhere, however, have the points at issue been more clearly stated than at Liverpool. In the memorial of 700 ratepayers of that borough, the reply of the board, and the rejoinder of the ratepayers, we have the question in all its bearings and issues placed in brief compass before us. But here, too, the discussions have ended in the adoption of a bye-law in favour of denominational payments—a modified one, but modified to no useful purpose.

But we are not, even temporarily, at the end of this subject. A deputation from Liverpool had an interview with Mr. Forster, at which Mr. Forster is reported to have expressed his hope that the Liverpool board would not strain the spirit of the Act in this direction. Strain the spirit of the Act? Why, the Act specially contemplates, permits, and suggests, the very action that is being taken. This is its language (25th clause):—"The school board may, if they think fit, from time to time, for a renewable period not exceeding six months, pay the whole or any part of the school fees payable at any public elementary school by any child resident in their district whose parent is, in their opinion, unable from poverty to pay the same; but no such payment shall be made or refused on condition of the child attending any public elementary school other than such as may be selected by the parent." Mr. Forster's present attitude of indecision is, however, a hopeful sign. He may, if he should think fit, veto the adoption of this bye-law by any and every board, or he may allow it in some towns and refuse it in others, according to circumstances. What its practical effect is likely to be, may be seen from the fact that in Manchester 4,000 applications for admission into existing schools have already been received, that 1,480 have been disposed of at a cost of more than 17*l.* a week, and that six-sevenths of the applications come from Churchmen and Roman Catholics.

7. *Schools surrendered.*

Another effect of the Act has been to close some existing voluntary schools, which had either lingered in poverty or which could have no chance of existence beside a rate-supported school. Thus we read the following notices:—

The British school at Llannon is to be discontinued.

At Axminster, Devon, the school is to be closed. The resolution in favour of a school board has been negatived.

The managers of the National School at Burford have resolved in favour of a school board by twelve to nine. They report to the department that they are in want of funds, and that they object to the school being carried on under sectarian principles.

The managers of the British School at Llansadwrn, Carmarthenshire, have intimated to the Education Department that they cannot continue to carry on the school, and they desire the establishment of a school board. Theirs is the only school in the parish. The population is 1,064.

And so on, fulfilling another of the prophecies of those who opposed some of the clauses of this Act.

8. *Other results.*

There are signs of three or four other important results following from the recent legislation. The school boards will probably, and with very beneficial results, extend the application of the Industrial Schools Act, to which attention has been especially directed, in London by Mr. Green, and in Portsmouth by Mr. Griffin. It will probably also bring about a better application of the funds of charitable endowments. This subject has been under discussion in London at the instance of Professor Huxley, and also at Exeter. Another result will be a vast demand for teachers, a vast increase in their number, and a corresponding increase in the public expense. Mr. Mundella is reported to be of opinion that there should be, and must be, "700,000" (query 70,000) trained teachers in England."

This brings us to the last item—*cost*. If the Act should be carried, as it probably will be, at least, for a time, into general and effective operation, the cost of working it in conjunction with the present system will scarcely amount to less than some four to five millions sterling a year. By-and-by, when the new shoe comes to pinch very hard, ratepayers may cast a longing eye on other than charitable endowments. Suppose this should be suggested to them? Then some good, other than that which was ever expected, may come from this Act.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

The annual services connected with the Sunday-school Union have lately been held. On Friday evening, April 28th, a meeting of the members took place in the Lecture-hall, Old Bailey. Here the report was read by Mr. Groser, the senior secretary, and unanimously adopted, as well as the appointment of the officers and committee. Mr. Daniel Pratt occupied the chair. On Tuesday evening, May 2, the Rev. Dr. BARRY, President of King's College, preached the annual sermon to teachers in St. James's Church, Clerkenwell. On Wednesday evening, May 3, the Rev. A. McAuslane preached to senior scholars in Finsbury Chapel.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

On Thursday morning, the twenty-sixth annual conference was held in the Lecture-hall, Old Bailey. Mr. D. Bratt (chairman of the Union) presided. The Rev. A. Hannay (secretary of the Congregational Union) presided at the prayer-meeting which immediately preceded the conference. There was a large attendance of delegates from country unions, including gentlemen from Birkenhead, Birmingham, Blackburn, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Bury, Cambridge, Derby, Halifax, Hastings, Ipswich, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Rochdale, Salford, Sheffield, &c. Among the visitors present were Count Andrew Bernstorff, Colonel Griffin, Mr. Robertson (of New York), and several ministers. The subject for conference was—"The Sunday-school an Integral Part of Church Organisation." An able and elaborate paper was read by the Rev. H. WILLIAMS (of Cuckfield). He was followed by Mr. Charles Reed, M.P., Mr. Featherstone, Mr. Whittaker (Blackburn), Mr. J. S. Wright (Birmingham), Mr. T. J. Cox, Mr. J. Pollett (Rochdale), Rev. Dr. Green (of Rawdon College), Count Andrew Bernstorff (of Berlin), Mr. E. Gates (Exeter), Mr. T. Brain, Mr. Butcher (Bury), Rev. H. S. Toms (Enfield), Mr. Heath, Mr. H. Chambers (Leicester), the Rev. Mr. Inglis (Thame), Mr. Llewellyn (Huntingdon), Mr. Gilbert Wood, Mr. J. A. Cooper (Birmingham), Mr. Henry Lee (Salford), Mr. W. Hall (Derby), Mr. F. J. Hartley, Rev. T. Penrose (Reading), Mr. Reeve (Chelmsford), and others. The conference was resumed in the afternoon.

PUBLIC MEETING.

The anniversary gathering of the Union at Exeter Hall has been for years past one of the most numerously-attended of the "May meetings," and this year there was no falling off in the attendance or interest of the assembly. The hall on Thursday night was crowded in every part, the platform being thronged with gentlemen who take an active interest in this important agency in the work of evangelisation. The Hon. Arthur Kinnaird, M.P., presided. A hymn having been sung, the Rev. CHARLES BRAKE implored the Divine blessing upon the proceedings of the evening.

The report, which was read by Mr. GROSER, referred to the extension of the Sunday-school system in various parts of the continent, to the success of the competitive examinations for Sunday-school teachers, to the arrangements made for Biblical lectures at the central hall, and to the statistics of schools in connection with the Union, and the state of the finances.

The CHAIRMAN delivered a brief and hearty address expressive of his unabated respect and affection for the Sunday-school Union and the work in which it was engaged. (Cheers.)

The Rev. J. D. BROCKLEHURST moved, and the Rev. ARCHIBALD BROWN, of Stepney, seconded, the adoption of the report.

Count BERNSTORFF (who had succeeded to the chair in consequence of Mr. Kinnaird being obliged to go to the House of Commons) warned those present against supposing that, because there was an almost universal movement throughout the world demanding secular instruction, the Sunday-schools would become unnecessary. It must be borne in mind that whatever religious instruction might be given in the day-schools, there was no security that the teachers would be really converted men, and the highest work of the Sunday-schools was, after all, not so much religious instruction, as the conversion of the hearts of the children to God. (Cheers.) Count Bernstorff then resigned the chair to Mr. Charles Reed, M.P.

The Rev. MARK WILKS, in moving the second resolution, said he rejoiced that the committee of the Sunday School Union had not given in to the feeble and absurd opinion that has been recently circulated, that because England has come to some sort of arrangement for a general system of education in the week, therefore the Sunday-school work would be unnecessary. On the contrary, he believed that the work of Sunday-schools must be continuous, intensified, and improved in quality if they were to meet the demands of the present age and the claims of this generation. The day-schools could not be expected to do this work. There was to be no inspection permitted in religious matters, and the Privy

Council of Education had placed the requirements for secular education so high, that no schoolmaster would be able to find time to give the instruction necessary in Biblical matters. Mr. Wilks then spoke of the importance of preparation for the teacher. There seemed to be an opinion current among Englishmen that every man can drive a horse, preach a sermon, edit a newspaper, and teach a class in a Sunday-school without preparation. The Sunday-School Union had never engaged in a better work than when it instituted the competitive examinations in Biblical subjects for Sunday-school teachers, which would encourage them to obtain such an acquaintance with the history of the periods of the Old and New Testament, combined with such a knowledge of the doctrines inculcated, that they would be enabled with the utmost facility to teach, and the children would find that the teachers were working upon a consecutive plan. If the Bible was to be the possession of the next generation, it must be not only by its being read in schools, but by its being rendered evident that the spirit inculcated in the Bible was influencing their daily lives. (Cheers.)

Mr. JOHN MACGREGOR ("Rob Roy"), in seconding the resolution, said that in this country there was a very prevalent feeling among all classes as to the value of Sunday-schools, but in other countries it was very hard to carry on that work. In France, with its frivolity and scepticism, in Roman Catholic countries, in Mahommedan countries, like Egypt and Syria, among the people of India, surrounded by Pagan practices, the work was much more difficult; in each of those countries he had himself taught Sunday-schools, and therefore he knew that their system was applicable in all such varied circumstances. He concluded by suggesting, as a topic for the next examination, "The evidences, such as they can be proved to simple folks, to prove the whole Bible is the Word of God." (Cheers.)

Mr. REED said it had been decided that that subject should be included in the subjects for next year.

Mr. DANIEL PRATT moved the adoption of a petition, praying for the rejection of the clause in Mr. Goschen's Bill, which would repeal the exemption from local taxation which had been conceded to Sunday-schools in 1869. He expressed his surprise that the Government should have proved themselves so determined to raise up pillars against which to knock their heads. A change like this would subject some of their Sunday-schools to a tax of 30*l*., 40*l*., and even 50*l*. a year. They must speak out determinedly.

Mr. TRESIDDER seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously, with loud demonstration of approval.

The Rev. NEWMAN HALL, in proposing a vote of thanks to the gentlemen who had occupied the chair that evening, said he feared that few had an adequate impression of the evil influence to which the young were exposed from singing saloons and similar amusements. He exhorted the teachers to teach them by precept and example to shun the intoxicating cup, and to strive to bring them from tender age into communion with the Church of Christ.

Mr. W. H. GROSER seconded the vote of thanks, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. REED, in responding, said he should be happy to take charge of their petition on the subject of rating schools, and he should do his best to show the Government the folly of thinking that they could reimpose a tax which the people never intended to throw on Sunday-schools. He expressed his satisfaction that the Earl of Shaftesbury had accepted the office of President of the Sunday-school Union for the ensuing year. (Cheers.)

The "Hallelujah Chorus" was very effectively sung at the close of the meeting.

CONGREGATIONAL UNION.

ADJOURNED SESSION.

On Friday morning the adjourned session of the Congregational Union was held in Finsbury Chapel, under the presidency of the Rev. THOMAS JONES. At first the attendance was very thin, but towards eleven o'clock the chapel was well filled. After devotional exercises, in which the Rev. G. INGRAM and the Rev. R. BRUCE took part, the first business brought forward was a resolution on the Supplement to the Hymn Book.

The Rev. Dr. MULLENS moved that the assembly approved of the step and remitted it to the committee to carry into effect. The subject had for some time occupied the attention of the Union, and one of its sub-committees had gone carefully into it. It was felt that while the present Hymn Book was acceptable, yet within the last ten years several matters had come up which rendered it advisable to supplement it before revising it. For instance, a very large number of new hymns of a high order had been written, and brethren were anxious to keep the psalmody of their churches abreast of the intelligence of the day, and were compiling supplements to embody the best hymns. Five or six of these supplements had been made in different parts of the country, and the Union felt that unless they took the matter in hand the property of their Hymn Book might be imperilled. This it was true was a minor point, in securing the best service of song. The Union committee had determined to publish a supplement to their own Hymn Book as the best course to take; and they thought that about 150 hymns with a selection of chants at the end would at present meet the case. They had therefore prepared a scheme, and they awaited the sanction of the assembly to carry it into effect. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. GROVER seconded the resolution.

The Rev. A. HANNAY, in answer to one or two questions, said that it was the intention of the committee to issue the supplement in such a form that it might be bound up with the hymn-book, and thus get rid of the disadvantage of having two books. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. B. FRENCH moved an amendment, the substance of which was that it would be wiser to wait for the revision of the hymn-book, than at the present time to issue a supplement. One object of the new book had been to get rid of a supplement, and it was a going back to revert to the old system of having two books. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. A. HANNAY said that the fact was they could not keep clear of supplements. There were several being published by popular ministers, and it was just a question of keeping the property of the Union in their own hands, and providing a hymn-book which should be *the* hymn-book of the Congregationalists. The intention of having a new hymn-book ten years hence was counted the best. The committee had looked at the matter on all sides, and had reluctantly came to the unanimous conclusion that the course they now recommended was the wisest. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. R. BRUCE said he heartily sympathised with Mr. French. He suggested that the committee should prepare a paper on the subject, so that country churches might be enlightened upon it. He thought that, for a while at least, the churches might rest content with one thousand hymns, which might fairly be said to meet their devotional wants, until the Union could adduce stranger reasons for the issue of a supplement. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. W. ROBERTS said that for each congregation to have its own supplement entailed considerable expense; and it should be known that by this craft of hymn-book profits the Union had its wealth. ("Hear, hear," and laughter.) The subscription to the Union would never support it; and if the brethren starved the hymn-book they starved themselves. If the question were put off for a year, two or three prominent projects would be floated, and the market of the Union would be gone. He hoped they might be spared the infliction of any gentleman's criticisms on hymns. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. J. KENNEDY said it would put congregations to great expense to purchase a new book just after they had bought one, while the proposal of a supplement would not involve them in any expense unless they pleased. (Hear, hear.)

The resolution was carried, with three dissentients.

THE EDUCATION DIFFICULTY.

The Rev. J. ALLANSON PICTON introduced a long debate upon the twenty-fifth clause of the Elementary Education Act by moving—

This Union, while earnestly maintaining that religious instruction and training are absolutely essential to a complete education, believes that funds raised by rates and taxes ought not to be applied to the maintenance of schools where sectarian teaching is given, and emphatically protests against the power conferred on school boards by Clause 25 of the Elementary Education Act, to pay fees to denominational day-schools, regarding such payment as a species of concurrent endowment, and a violation of the principle of religious equality.

Mr. Picton said that the clause referred to was well known, but that they might keep distinctly before them the point, he would call attention to the general tendency of the Act, and the inconsistency especially of this clause. Much fault had been found with the Act; but, on the whole, it pointed in a right direction, as freeing education from ecclesiastical laws. (Cheers.) It went almost as far as could be expected. The seventh clause reserved to denominational schools the right of receiving grants from Government, and it insisted on a time-table conscience clause. The fourteenth section said that no religious catechism or formulary should be used in the schools at all, and this was added because there was a special difficulty in applying rates to the purposes of denominational schools. Then, grant-schools were supposed to depend on the voluntary principle, while board-schools depended wholly on public funds. He had the honour of being in the House of Commons the other night, when their principles received so great a triumph. (Cheers.) He noticed that it was the habit of a large number of members to lean back in their seats, with their hats over their eyes, as if in a state of somnolency, and he could not help thinking that some of the Liberal members had been in that state when this clause was passed. It involved the maintenance of religion out of the public funds; it was concurrent endowment in a most offensive form. It would take 20,000*l*. or 30,000*l*. a year of public money to sustain sectarian education. When churches undertook sectarian education, it was always with some sectarian motive. It was never intended that the Church should teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. After all, the Episcopalian and Roman Catholic schools were the true denominational schools, and the public were to be asked to pay for their support. He cordially moved the resolution which he had read. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. THOMAS SCRUTTON seconded, expressing the hope that by good schools and a sound education they would eventually compel all denominational schools to come under the influence of school boards. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. EUSTACE CONDER said the resolution was simply a protest, and they wanted something positive. By being obstructive, and not instructive, they were not raising the character of the Union before the world. The difficulty was in the case of a certain "Mike Donovan," to whom it was said, If you cannot pay the fees, we will pay them for you, but on condition that you send your son to such and such a school; you are poor, and you are a Roman Catholic; and you have no right to a conscience; your conscience is that of the Evangelical Nonconformist ratepayer. He (Mr. Conder) begged the assembly to look at it on all sides. Here was a poor child drowned in a muddy stream, and the cry was to save him. The strong arm of the law came in to save him, but he was not to be pulled out on one side because there was an Episcopalian Church, and on the other a Nonconformist. Was it better for the child to remain in ignorance, or to be educated and become a Roman Catholic? Would he not, as a Roman Catholic and educated, be much more likely to live and die a Christian citizen? He would that the Union should urge the school boards against the perversion of payments for sectarian purposes. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Conder concluded with moving the following amendment:—

That this Union, while desiring that the question of the payment of school fees on behalf of the necessitous poor should be dealt with in a broad and liberal spirit with a view to the effective carrying out of the Elementary Education Act, would respectfully urge upon school boards the importance of the utmost watchfulness against the perversion of such payments to sectarian purposes.

The Rev. A. REED asked what was to be done with children whose parents were too poor to pay, but who were, nevertheless, desirous of sending them to school? Where was the accommodation? The school boards had few schools established, and where were the children to be sent to? Were they to be turned adrift? It was better to express a broad opinion that the children should be sent to school, and help their parents to send them, provided the education was good in substance. He would trust the school boards; he believed them to be fairly chosen. (Cheers, and "No, no.") The Act was beginning to work well, and the school boards were determined to watch against a sectarian system of education rather than to promote it. It was better to trust them than to oppose them. He believed in this Act there were tendencies to restrain more and more sectarian influence in schools, and he seconded Mr. Conder's motion. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. R. W. DALE, who was loudly called for, said he did not understand the intention of the amendment. It was a kind of amendment in which there was no substance. (Laughter.) He thought perhaps that it might assume more solidity as the debate went on, but hitherto it had not done so. The object of those who believed in the resolution was definite, to get the 25th clause of the bill repealed. (Loud cheers.) They could not be charged with attempting to obstruct the progress of popular education. Mr. Forster had admitted that the bill would not have been passed but for the popular feeling which they had excited. They had not been called to offer any obstruction to the development of education, and they opposed this clause because it would repress a system which would be productive of the best results. (Cheers.) Alluding to the action of School Boards, Mr. Dale said they had determined not to build free schools. At present they had not remitted fees, but they had determined to pay fees to denominational schools. He maintained that it was just as much a duty to build free schools as to pay fees. (Cheers.) Mr. Conder could not understand a ratepayer's conscience, but if he had had his goods sold for Church-rates he might have been able to do so. Mr. Conder's argument was that of the old Church-rate. (Cheers.) It was only to be expected that in the course of this debate some imaginary, unhappy Irish child should be introduced to move their sympathies. (Great laughter.) This was now the classic argument. When they were discussing the question of compulsion there was always a mythical widow with half-a-dozen children, and we were asked whether we would be so cruel as to send them to school when their earnings were needful to their mother. The widow has had a decent burial, and Michael O'Donovan has taken her place. (Renewed laughter.) Mr. Conder's entire argument was inconsistent with the hypothesis on which the Elementary Education Bill was built. It was built on this, that the conscience clause included within definite limits all religious education to which a parent might object. He asked them to protest against a system of propagandism for sustaining denominational education. They had good grounds on which to go to Mr. Forster on this matter. (Cheers.)

The Rev. W. URWICK said a few words in favour of the amendment, after which

The Rev. H. BRUCE said he could vote neither for the resolution nor the amendment. He should be sorry if the division would have the effect of weakening the hands of brethren to whom they were much indebted, especially Mr. Dale and Mr. Picton. (Cheers.) It was needful to know who the parties were that were applying the Act in a narrow spirit. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. Dr. EDMOND took his seat on the platform at this stage of the proceedings, and was loudly cheered.

The Rev. Dr. RALEIGH said he wanted to press one point, that as a matter of fact the Government and those who took their view of the question might make up their mind to this, that there was a very considerable class of men in the country who loved liberty, who never could be persuaded that this measure in its present incidence on conscience and liberty was right, and unless there was a modification of the Act there would be a demonstration

such as the old Church-rate days witnessed. (Cheers.) Of the two, he rather preferred the old Church-rate, for he had a kind of respect for it. (Cheers and laughter.) There was a great deal to be said for the old Church-rate. The Church clock gave the only time of the neighbourhood; and now, at least, they knew the kind of service to be found within the Church, and that it was kept in strict limits under law. But the Church-rate, like other doubtful subjects, had been buried "in sure and certain hope"—(immense laughter)—and here it was again. It was said this was a little matter; but it was not really so. It related to a great principle which was working through all their social life. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. Mr. HUTCHINSON (Ashton-under-Lyne) believed the resolution did not meet the difficulties of the case, and that the payment of fees to denominational schools was not inconsistent with Congregational principles. He was prepared to move an amendment to that effect, should Mr. Conder's not be carried.

The Rev. THOS. DAVIES, Darwen, said that in his town they had no school board, but many thought of getting one for the purpose of bringing the compulsory power of the Act into play. The resolution, however, would forbid that. He wanted to know what they were to do with poor children unless they were permitted to pay the fees for them.

The assembly at this stage of the proceedings became restless, the debate having continued three hours. Several gentlemen rose to speak, amid loud cries of "Vote, vote."

The Rev. H. ALLON moved the previous question. He pointed out two or three fallacies which appeared to him to have crept into the debate. One was that because children received education in denominational schools and were paid for by any body that therefore that was a support of the school itself. Again, objection was taken, not to the equity of the bill, but to the incidentals and accidentals of it. For his own part, he could not oppose a measure which was equitable but accidentally opposed to himself. He moved the previous question because he did not believe that they could pass a resolution which would be satisfactory. (Hear.)

The Rev. J. G. ROGERS said if they were to go against denominational education as they were prepared to go, then they were told that they were interfering with the system called into existence by Act of Parliament. If, on the contrary, they were going to teach that which is, but did protest against a stronger hold being laid on the public purse, then they were as strangely misrepresented. If the question was to be raised about denominational education they were prepared to raise it; but their position was that they would not render the success of national schools doubtful by helping denominational schools to success. He wanted to see great national schools if they were to have schools at all. (Cheers.)

Mr. HEATH, Hackney, wanted a strong expression of opinion from the Congregationalists. There should be a "certain sound" upon the point whether they wanted to revive the old Church-rate, or whether they meant to stand by the old principle. (Hear.)

The Rev. W. STATHAM thought the difficulty might be got rid of by handing over all schools to the Government. He hoped Mr. Picton's resolution would be carried by an overwhelming majority. Religion might safely be left wholly to the Church. (Cheers.)

Mr. J. W. WILLANS seconded Mr. Allon's moving of the previous question, remarking, amid cries of "No," that the exclusion of the Bible from the schools would be the grossest violation of liberty.

Mr. HARTLEY said that even "we" secularists believed that no education could be complete without the Bible, although they did not hold that it was necessary that it should be taught by the same man, in the same building, and at the same time.

The Rev. J. A. PICTON briefly replied. He said there was no question of secular education before the meeting. He had his own views upon that question, but he had not urged them. Nor was there any question of Parliamentary grants. They were contending about board schools, for the support of which every penny comes from the public purse. On that the resolution said that they, as a Union, protested against extorting rates for the purpose of supporting denominational schools. Was, or was not, Voluntaryism sufficient? They had always contended that the Christian religion, as an educating power, and as the inspirer of humanity, was capable of being supported by Voluntaryism. If now they hesitated to protest against these fees, supporters of the Establishment might well say, "You have no confidence in your own principles." (Cheers.)

Mr. Allon's "previous question" was now put, when about a dozen hands were held up in favour of it. Mr. Conder's amendment was next put, when four hands were held up for it. The original resolution was carried amid great cheering.

Mr. HUTCHINSON claimed the right to move another amendment, the substance of which was that it was not inconsistent with Congregational principles to admit the payment of fees for religious education.

The Rev. J. KENNEDY was understood to second the amendment.

The Rev. Dr. HALLEY, amidst cheers and laughter, said that he had attended to vote against every resolution and every amendment that in any way whatever recognised the propriety of education being supported by the public expense. (Cheers.)

The amendment was, we need not say, lost, and the original resolution was carried amid great applause. This brought the long debate to a close.

THE UNIVERSITY TESTS.

The Rev. H. ALLON moved the following resolution:—

That this assembly strongly disapproves of the amendments to the University Tests Bill passed by the House of Lords, especially to the novel religious test thereby imposed; and that the committee be requested to embody this resolution as a memorial to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, and to urge the Government to resist the amendments to the utmost.

In moving the resolution, Mr. Allon said that Lord Salisbury had distinctly violated the understanding on which the bill was brought in, and therefore they ought to keep no terms with him. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. NEVILLE GOODMAN seconded the resolution. He said a snare had been spread for them; it was well planned, because there were no bodies of men who had a greater reverence for the Bible thad Nonconformist bodies. Lord Salisbury said the sceptical Liberationists were the wire-pullers, and the Dissenters the wire-pulled; but they knew their own principles as well as his lordship did, and took his remark as an insult. He (Mr. Goodman) thought it should now be made manifest whether men in the Universities had been struggling for religious liberty or struggling for themselves. He appealed to the Assembly strongly upon this point. The men who had hitherto represented them at Cambridge had done so conscientiously, and if they struggled for honours which they knew were beyond their reach, they did so from the knowledge that while others were stimulated by endowments, they were stimulated by the fact that they were fighting for their principles, and would rather forego any honour rather than forego them. (Cheers.)

The resolution was unanimously adopted.

DEPUTATIONS, &c.

The Rev. J. KENNEDY stated the cordial manner in which he had been received in Scotland; first out of respect to the Union by whom he had been delegated, and, secondly, on account of his being an old member of the Scottish Union. (Cheers.)

The Rev. J. WHITE, Belfast, who was very cordially received, gave an interesting account of the prosperity which was in the churches in Ireland, especially in the North. Incidentally he remarked that if they were to have denominational education in Ireland it would ruin the cause of education.

The Rev. J. C. GALLAWAY, in reference to the insurance fund question, said the fund stood at 14,000*l.*; a property worth 350,000*l.* from different churches was offered for insurance. They wanted 6,000*l.* more to bring up the sum to the proposed guarantee fund.

After votes of thanks had been presented, the doxology was sung and the proceedings terminated.

THE ADVOCACY OF CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLES.

On Friday evening, instead of the large meeting usually held at St. James's Hall, four district meetings were held for the advocacy of Congregational principles. At Craven Chapel Mr. H. Wright presided, and the speakers were Revs. Dr. Parker, W. Marshall, and Dr. Morton Brown. At Lower Clapton Chapel Mr. Charles Reed, M.P., presided, supported by Revs. G. W. Conder, W. Cuthbertson, and A. Reed. At Stepney Meeting Mr. Thos. Scrutton took the chair, and the speakers were Revs. W. M. Statham, H. H. Carlisle, and A. McAuslane. At Union Chapel Mr. Henry Lee presided, supported by the Rev. H. Allon, the Rev. Mark Wilks, the Revs. H. W. Parkinson, G. S. Barrett, T. W. Davids, Mr. Aldis, &c. After prayer had been offered by the Rev. Mark Wilks,

The CHAIRMAN said that they came to that meeting because they valued Congregational principles as fitting them for the duties of life and their duties to society. Their principles, every day, were coming more prominently before the public mind, and a great many outside their own denomination were feeling that there was much of truth in them. They saw them developed in Ireland, and ere long they hoped to see them developed in England. The strength of Congregational principles lay in the fact that they were New Testament principles. The force which made a country great was moral force, and this was to be found in its citizens living New Testament principles. They had not come there that evening to say hard words, but they did believe that they were in possession of a truth which was destined to grow and excite a mighty influence. (Hear, hear).

The Rev. H. PARKINSON, Rochdale, said he desired to glance at one aspect of an immensely large question. It had been set before us lately by a very liberal and courteous opponent—Mr. Llewellyn Davies. Looking into our principles, he thinks he sees that they may resolve themselves mainly into two; that we claim spirituality and freedom, and that we say to Churchmen, "We are spiritual and you are secular; we are free, you are in bondage." Having thus defined our claim, he contends it with us. This is at least very able policy, for it not only boldly meets the assailant, but at once puts him on the defensive. Now, as to spirituality: the verdict of history will be tolerably clear from the time when the Gospel came into the world down to the present. It was not until Christianity as a spiritual religion had been winning its triumphs for 300 years, in spite of ten great persecutions, that the State came into any friendly relations with it, and only did so then for the sake of its own interests. (Hear, hear.) But if this theory were sound, that spirituality flourished most in an Established Church, the days succeeding the patronage of Christianity by the State ought to have been much more prosperous. But, it was a fact that from the time of Constantine we began to remark the decline of the spiritual power, and a gradual increase of every kind of worldliness and corruption, until at last the most fearful abuses and scandals were perpetrated in the very name of religion. (Hear, hear.) We might, therefore fairly begin to doubt whether Establishments are favourable to Christianity. We had very little success in advancing spirituality by the building of cathedrals and ordaining bishops. Answering the objection that what he had been saying referred to a long time ago, Mr. Parkinson said that the first thing they met with in happy England was the Act of Uniformity, which drove out the most spiritual persons the Church then possessed. Then came Wesley and Whitefield, who were also opposed by the State-Church. The clergy of that day drove so much spiritual life out of the Church that they have since bitterly regretted it, and had made many impotent attempts to get it back again. (Hear, hear.) If the question were looked at in another light—that of spiritual enterprise at home—chapels multiplied faster than churches, and in missionary enterprises abroad, the nonconforming agents in converting great heathen nations were winning their way to greater spiritual results. So far as he (Mr. Parkinson) could judge, it was to the present time that Mr. Ll. Davis would limit the comparison. There was no doubt that there was great piety in the Church now, but it was not in the least degree due to the fact that it was established by law. (Hear, hear.) We were now at the beginning of the last stage of this great controversy. As the time advances it will be seen that we were the best friends both of religion and the Church. (Cheers.)

Mr. ALDIS, who expressed himself hopefully on the motion which Mr. Miall had introduced into the House of Commons, alluded to the novel test which the Marquis of Salisbury had contrived to devise, to let in all who were religious into the universities, and to keep out all heretics. He has explained that all Dissenters had been actuated by motives not strictly religious. He has challenged them to say whether there shall be a chance of their holding honours. He (Mr. Aldis) should be glad to hear a firm response to this challenge. This new test would be a direct insult to religion. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Aldis concluded by moving a resolution strongly disapproving of Lord Salisbury's scheme; it was seconded by the Rev. H. ALLON, and unanimously adopted.

The Rev. G. S. BARRETT, of Norwich, addressed the meeting on the religious objection to a State Church. He said a political Dissenter, as he was termed, was not a man who made his religion political, but his politics religious. He belonged to earth as well as heaven, and had to discharge the duties of citizenship in a religious spirit. He denied that a political Dissenter was one whit less devout than a religious Dissenter. Mr. Miall's motion had its root in religious conviction. In stating his objection to a State Church, Mr. Barrett said that it spoiled and destroyed the religious element in the Church. He recognised heartily what was best and truest in it; but they could not marry two great powers without giving cause of quarrel. In its place the State was as Divine as the Church; but it had its place, and that was not in union with the Church. In time, he believed, the clergy would recognise the purity of their motives and their aims, and help them to do away with the vital hindrance which an establishment put between the union of Christian men. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. T. W. DAVIDS, referring to the work of the Sacerdotalists in the Church of England, said their intense activity was not the least noteworthy sign of these eventful times. The skill and effectiveness with which they worked the press was most exemplary. There was not a department of literature in which their productions were not among the ablest of the day. In theology, history, poetry, fiction, many of them had no mean pretensions to be ranked among the classics of the age. Their periodicals were written, if not with a power, certainly with a "sweetness and light." And their tracts, for literary adaptation, for manner, and for form, were models of what such productions ought to be. The zeal and energy with which they worked their missions were no less exemplary. Ought we not to emulate them in these respects? Will not the wealthier among us come to our aid to do so? We have gifts, we have learning, we have writing power; will not the wealthier among us encourage and enable such to use the talents which they are entrusted with? If we are to do the Lord's work as we need to do it just at present, we must set a higher example than that of mere free trade. A press that pays, periodicals that pay, will only disappoint us. We must have a press that, whether it succeeds commercially or not, must do the work we need to have done, or we shall be dishonoured, if not, also, beaten in the race. (Hear, hear.) It behoved them to have understanding of the times; for the sacerdotal spirit was in earnest. The questions people were asking now were, What is the sacrament? what is the clergyman? what is the Church? and these involved the most momentous one of all—What must we do to be saved? Ought not we to be in earnest, then, in every direction? He feared the sceptic much less than he did the priest; but he did not even fear the priest if the churches did but rouse themselves to see what they had really at stake. (Hear, hear.)

A vote of thanks to the chairman and the benediction closed the proceedings.

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